



Representative Ed Murray

State Representative • 43rd DISTRICT

2000 SESSION UPDATE: Focus on Transportation

February 2000

Dear Neighbor:

I want to take this opportunity to talk with you about the impacts of Initiative 695 and about transportation in our state in general. I-695 likely will dominate lawmakers' time as the Legislature begins the 60-day session. The initiative replaces the motor-vehicle excise tax with a flat license-tab fee that starts at \$30 a year. In addition, all fee increases by government will require a vote of the people.

Although this district voted 81 percent against I-695, a majority of Washington voters supported it in the election last November, and our duty as legislators is implementing the will of the people. As we put provisions of I-695 into effect, we still must meet our responsibility to public health and safety, and our constitutional duty to fully fund education. We are up to the task.

The initiative will make important changes in your state government. Under the new law, the state will have to change the way it helps city and county governments for police and fire services, and for more local items like child immunizations. Funding for public-transportation systems and transit districts like Metro will be significantly cut as a result of I-695's passage.

Though lawmakers' response to this issue will crowd our agenda, we also will continue working on important priorities for you and your families. These include a Patients' Bill of Rights, access to health insurance, class-size reductions and school safety, improvements in state government services, privacy protection, jobs programs for laid-off workers, protecting our environment, and more. I strongly encourage you to contact me and tell me how I can better serve you.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ed Murray".

Ed Murray
State Representative
43rd Legislative District



How you can reach me:

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Seattle, WA 98112
206-720-3074

Toll-free legislative hotline:

1-800-562-6000

Hearing-impaired hotline:

1-800-635-9993

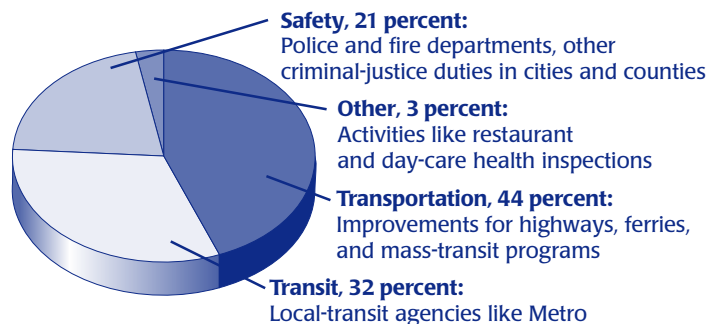
Setting priorities in response to I-695

The impacts of I-695's passage will be felt at all levels of state, county, and city government in Washington. It cuts into highway projects, transit systems, police and fire departments, public-health inspections, and more.

In response, I and other House Democrats will be guided by several principals:

- Fully funding education;
- Maintaining critical health and safety programs; and
- Finding cost-efficiencies in state government, such as Gov. Gary Locke's Savings Incentive Program, which has already saved hundreds of millions of dollars in the last few years alone.

Here's how the lost revenue would have been spent under budgets passed by the Legislature last session:



I-695 and cuts to Metro

With the passage of I-695, we can expect more congestion on major roadways in the Seattle area because it takes resources from our efforts to reduce gridlock and promote alternative transportation. Over the next several years, we'll lose as much as \$7 billion — perhaps \$750 million a year — in the transportation budget for mass transit, ferries, freight-mobility projects, and highway safety and maintenance.

Metro had announced that one-third, or about \$100 million, would be cut in annual transit revenues and \$80 million over the next six years in revenues for roads. Bus-service cuts are set to start in February. I want to ensure that Seattle residents can still travel to work, to school, or to their doctor's office by bus. As a member of the House Transportation Committee, I will work with Gov. Locke and my colleagues to minimize the impact of expected cuts.



Should we tap into our "rainy day" account?

Today we have about \$1.2 billion set aside in reserves. Many like to compare this to a savings account for a rainy day. As a lawmaker, I want to hear from the voters about our choices:

- We can tap these reserves to cover losses in transportation and other programs, but just for a year or two. However, once the reserve is used, the state could be

vulnerable in the event of an economic downturn or an unforeseen crisis.

- We can amend Initiative 601 to allow us to use some of the emergency-reserve fund. This may be difficult as it requires a two-thirds' vote by lawmakers to spend this reserve.
- We can leave this account untouched, forcing cuts elsewhere in the state's \$20.6 billion general fund. This funds pays for programs such as public schools, higher education, health care and social services, corrections, debt service, and other areas like natural resources management.

Funding public-safety and public-health efforts

A lot of the MVET revenue went for police and fire safety in local communities statewide. During the next three and a half years, communities may lose more than \$180 million for public-safety services. Law-enforcement officials have said up to 1,000 police officers might have to be laid off.

MVET revenue also supported county public-health programs, which will lose an estimated \$91 million in the next three and a half years. These programs range from immunizations for children to flu shots for seniors. Lawmakers may wish to keep the current funding level for these programs by taking funds from other budget areas, such as Washington's share of the settlement with Big Tobacco. Some health advocates are against this. Expect this debate during the weeks ahead.

Transportation alternatives deserve support

No one in the 43rd District needs to be reminded that the Seattle metro area ranks as the second or third worst in the nation in terms of traffic congestion. Residents traveling on State Route 520 and Interstate 5 know just how awful the problem is. Time stuck in traffic is time we'd rather spend at home, with our families. That's why I'm continuing to work with our communities and state officials on relieving congestion and promoting alternative forms of transportation, locally and statewide.

The Seattle area already has many transit systems that work, plus the voter-approved Sound Transit system, which will link Puget Sound communities from Tacoma to Everett by bus and light rail. But if we cut programs that give people incentives to take the bus, vanpool, walk, or bike, we will add up to 18,500 cars to the road statewide each day. The loss of MVET under I-695 means we lost a funding source once set for programs that reduce transportation demand, including bike trails, transit, rail, and the commute-trip reduction program. With support for these programs at risk, I and other lawmakers will be looking at ways to continue supporting mass transit.

As a member of the House Transportation Committee, I will work with my colleagues so we develop alternative funding solutions. In the committee and on the House floor, we will



likely debate whether we can give King County the authority to go to the public for funding future Metro operations. We also will debate possible tax incentives to support Sound Transit. At the very least, I will work with lawmakers to be sure programs that give people incentives to commute without a car are maintained. I am asking for your input as the session continues to help me in my efforts.

Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation

Since 1998, I have sat on the Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation, a nonpartisan group of 43 volunteer commissioners from across our state who are committed to finding solutions on moving goods and people in Washington. Our job isn't easy, but our mission is crucial. The state's transportation system involves 450 agencies that oversee 80,000 miles of roads. Our task could not be more important as our growing population burdens our roads, bridges, and transit systems, many of which need repairs and upgrades. The shortfalls of our regional transportation system are painfully obvious in Seattle.

The commission's job just became that much harder with expected losses of \$750 million a year in transportation funding due to I-695. We will have to choose between competing priorities, and then pay for them without all the resources we once had before voters approved I-695 and blew a hole in roads projects, transit funding, and ferry services. Later this year, the commission's recommendations will be announced. Gov. Locke already has announced he was waiting for the commission's findings before he proposed his response to fill a hole left in the state's \$2 billion, six-year traffic plan to ease congestion.

Transportation telephone directory

King County/Metro Telephone numbers:

24-hour rider information: (206) 553-3000
BUS-TIME (automated schedule info): (206) 287-8463
Customer service: (206) 553-3060
Carpool and vanpool information: (206) 625-4500
Community relations: (206) 684-1162
Custom bus office: (206) 684-1743
Lost and found: (206) 553-3090
Pass and ticket sales: (206) 624-PASS

TT/TTY services

Customer service: (206) 684-1739
Carpool and vanpool services: (206) 684-1855
Route and schedule information: (206) 684-1739

King County Telephone numbers:

King County Road Services: 206-296-6510
Road problems: (206) 296-8100, 1-800-527-6237
Reporting traffic problems: (206) 296-6596
RoadShare (Bicycle, pedestrian information): (206) 263-4729

Useful Seattle telephone numbers

City of Seattle - general information: (206) 386-1234
Adopt-A-Street: (206) 684-7647
Bicycle & Pedestrian Program: (206) 684-7583
Bike racks (installation): (206) 684-7583
Street-problem hotline: (206) 684-7508, 386-1218
Neighborhood transportation: (206) 684-7570
Residential parking zones: (206) 684-5092, 5086
Residential street concerns: (206) 684-7577
RideShare, commuter services in Seattle: (206) 684-0816
Sidewalk and planting strips: (206) 684-5253
Traffic circles: (206) 684-0817
Transportation hotline: (206) 684-7623
TTY/TDD: (206) 684-4009

Washington State Department of Transportation:

Highway information: (206) 368-4499
WSDOT - ferry system: (206) 464-6400

Other Useful Telephone numbers:

Community Transit, Snohomish County: 1-800-562-1375
Pierce County Transit: 1-800-562-8109
Sound Transit (RTA): 1-800-201-4900

Actiongram

Send me a note about your legislative priorities for the 2000 session and your recommendations for addressing I-695:

*You can cut out this
Actiongram and mail it
in a stamped envelope
to my Olympia office.*

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Representative Ed Murray

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